

Michigan  
Department  
of Human  
Services

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Communications  
(517) 373-7394

# Articles in Today's Clips

**Tuesday, April 11, 2006**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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# State aims to help kids before entering foster care

**Under fire for Ricky's death, Mich. will spend more on prevention services like counseling.**

**Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News**

**Tuesday, April 11, 2006**

Thousands of Wayne County children at risk for entering the foster care system may avoid it now that Michigan has gotten federal approval to use some of its \$95 million in foster care funds for prevention services. Families could get counseling, financial supports, respite, parental training and intensive services from social workers. The services are aimed at addressing problems before they lead to children entering the foster care system.

"This isn't about saving money, this is about saving lives," Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, said Monday. "Just focusing on foster care is too late. We can help many children and families before they enter the foster care system."

The change comes as the state is under fire for the death of 7-year-old Ricky Holland, who was removed from his biological parents' home and later adopted by a couple charged with murdering him. But Udow said the change was not sparked by the Holland case but rather by a statewide effort to overhaul its child welfare system and decrease the disproportionate number of black children in the system.

Children in foster care are later at risk for criminal behavior, homelessness, unemployment and unintended pregnancies, Udow said, so it behooves everyone to try and keep as many children as possible out of the system.

There are slightly less than 19,000 Michigan children in foster care, the majority of them removed from their home because of neglect. Two years ago, the state developed plans to overhaul the system. One of the plans was to get federal permission, also known as a waiver, to use more federal foster funding on prevention services. Michigan was one of five states approved for the waiver.

Advocates of children in foster care were pleased to hear about the state's new direction. "Prevention is key," said Elizabeth Brazilian, who co-founded a Michigan branch of Childhelp USA in Rochester Hills. "We want to reduce the number of children coming into the system and I am sure the state wants to do the same thing."

It is unclear how much money will be used in prevention, but the effort will begin in five communities, including two in Wayne County. The other three communities are still to be determined.

*You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or [kkozlowski@detnews.com](mailto:kkozlowski@detnews.com)*

# **State may see fewer kids in foster care**

**Federal waiver lets Mich. pay for efforts to keep kids with parents**

**By Stacey Range**

**Lansing State Journal**

**Published April 11, 2006**

Thousands of Michigan youths may be able to remain in their homes under a federal waiver allowing the state to use foster care money to help families rather than take away their children.

It could mean thousands of Michigan youths might remain in their homes.

Families at risk of having their children removed could instead be offered mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, safer housing, clothing and parenting lessons.

"It's all about helping sooner before children are in danger," said state Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow. "In most cases, these parents want to be good parents, but they don't always know where to go for services."

Current rules restrict foster care money to being used when children enter into the system.

The waiver, which four other states also received, allows Michigan to spend some of the \$95 million it gets annually for foster care on more early intervention services. Michigan has about 19,000 children in foster care. About 75 percent of them were taken from their families because of neglect.

Udow pointed to a recent case of a mother who whipped her child with a belt. She said the mother was a good parent who had never before raised concerns of abuse. The state was able to get her some counseling and keep the family together.

Other families could get help paying heating bills or buying a refrigerator to keep food in the house so their children aren't taken away, said Sharon Parks of the Michigan League for Human Services, a Lansing-based advocacy group.

"This allows for more practical responses," Parks said. "It gives the state the flexibility to work with families in a holistic way."

The state also could use some of the money to reunite parents with their children, or when that's not possible, to get the children adopted more quickly. Funds also could be used to pay relatives caring for foster children. They do not now receive payments that other foster families receive.

Jim Paparella, executive director of Child & Family Services - Capital Area, said federal restrictions on the funds can act as a deterrent to family reunification.

"As soon as we send those kids home, federal funds are cut off," said Paparella, whose agency handled about 220 foster care placements last year. "There needs to be more emphasis on keeping families intact and getting kids home sooner."

The initiative will begin with pilot projects in five communities, including two in Wayne County. Other sites will be selected after they submit proposals on how they would use the money.

Control sites will be used to compare and assess the project. If the cost per case is lower in test areas, the project will be expanded statewide.

Details including how much money will be diverted are to be determined over the next few months. Implementation is expected sometime between October and March 2007.

Other states granted waivers are California, Florida, Tennessee and Iowa.

Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or [srange@lsj.com](mailto:srange@lsj.com)

# State gets waiver that could put fewer children in foster care

4/10/2006, 5:10 p.m. ET

By KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Thousands of Michigan children may be able to remain with their families rather than go into foster care now that the state has received federal permission to use some foster care dollars to better help those families.

Services could include mental health counseling, substance abuse help, food, housing, clothing and intensive home visits from social workers trained to teach parents to treat their children appropriately. The state's goal is not to save money but to use the money differently so more children can remain safely with their own families and avoid foster care, state Department of Human Services director Marianne Udow told reporters Monday.

"It's all about helping sooner before children are in danger," she said. "In most cases, these parents want to be good parents. They don't always know where to go for services." Some of the funds will be used to help families regain children in foster care or, where that is impossible, to help children be adopted more quickly.

The new focus has been made possible by a federal waiver that will allow the state to spend part of the \$107 million it gets annually in federal funds for foster care on more early intervention. Michigan has about 19,000 children in foster care, although not all are covered by money included in the waiver.

Some of the funds will go to pay relatives who are acting as foster parents, Udow said. They currently cannot receive the payments that go to other foster care families. The state will begin the new approach with demonstration projects in several counties, including Wayne, the state's most populous. The other counties will be selected after they submit proposals on how they would use the money. The program is expected to start sometime between September 2006 and March 2007, Udow said, and will be expanded to other counties in future years.

Because 70 to 75 percent of children in foster care are there because of neglect, not abuse, helping poor parents get food, clothing and adequate housing for their children and some child-rearing guidance could be enough to keep those children with their parents, she said. The department will take the next three to six months to decide how much of the federal funds can be shifted from foster care to more intensive services aimed at keeping families together or reuniting them.

"We believe we will be able to serve many more families with this waiver because of the money we save in foster care," Udow said. She said foster care will remain an option in some cases. "Safety's No. 1," she said. "We're not going to leave a child in an unsafe situation."

Michigan was one of five states granted a waiver by the federal government. The others were California, Florida, Tennessee and Iowa, which proposed their own ways of using the federal funds.

# **Human services receives foster care waiver**

**GONGWER NEWS SERVICE**

**MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2006**

The Department of Human Services will now be able to use some of the \$95 million it receives in federal foster care aid for family preservation and reunification programs.

Human Services Director Marianne Udow said Monday that the waiver would potentially allow the state to increase the number of families it reaches with services while at the same time reducing foster care caseloads.

The funds also would be available to provide assistance to relatives providing foster care, Ms. Udow said. Among the department's efforts is to keep children within the family even if they are removed from their parents' home.

"We believe we will be able to provide services to many more families at a lower cost," Ms. Udow said of the pilots planned under the waiver. One of the requirements of the waiver is that the state show that the alternative programs are as effective as foster care at keeping children safe but operate at a lower cost per family.

"The goal here is not to save money in total," Ms. Udow said. "The goal is to strengthen families far earlier in the system."

She noted that it is also a requirement in federal foster care law to work to keep children in their families whenever possible.

"It is not our intent to put children at risk with this," she said.

But she said more than 70 percent of the children in foster care are in the system because of neglect, not abuse. "This means that we can do something about it," she said.

The initial program calls for pilots in five counties, though Ms. Udow said which five counties and how much of the federal funds would be shifted to those programs is still under review. The pilots are not set to start until October at the earliest, and she said the department will spend the time in between developing a business plan that would lay out what services would be available in each county, how many families would be expected for each and what the costs would be.

She also expected the balance of costs between foster care and the alternative services to shift over time as more families coming into the system, or at least to caseworkers' attention, are guided to the alternative programs.

The waiver overcomes two key failings of the current federal Title IV-E program, which provides the bulk of federal funding for foster care, Ms. Udow said. The standard funding is only available to children already in foster care and only if they otherwise would have qualified for Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

The latter requirement is particularly troubling, Ms. Udow said, because AFDC was replaced with Temporary Aid to Needy Families as part of the welfare reforms of the late 1990s.

“We closed many of those cases yet there are many children needing foster care,” Ms. Udow said.

But she said the programs the department does still offer also provide a contact point to potentially help families from reaching a neglect or abuse crisis. “If we could reach those families while there are stability issues,” she said. “In a large percentage of cases these parents want to be good parents, they don’t know where to reach out for service.”

# **New Ways To Spend Foster Care Money**

MIRS, Monday, April 10, 2006

Michigan plans to use its \$95 million in federal foster care money to try keeping families together before mounting in-home tensions or economic troubles escalate into abuse or abandonment, eventually turning victimized children into foster kids.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) announced today that the federal government granted Michigan a waiver to put a "substantial percentage" of its annual allotment of foster care money into "Families First" and other programs aimed at preventing poor children from becoming wards of the state.

"This approval is a tremendous boost to our overall plan for protecting children and preserving families," said DHS Director Marianne **UDOW**. "Our actions to date have already resulted in fewer children in the foster care system, fewer children re-entering the system and more children placed with relatives."

The state will try out this prevention approach in four pilot counties within the next three to six months. Wayne County is one of the four. As far as the other three, counties will be able to bid to participate. Counties with high numbers of foster kids and those partnering with community-based non-profits will jump to the top of the list.

Every year, the feds give Michigan \$95 million to pay the foster care costs of children coming from certain poor families. This year Michigan was one of five states granted a waiver to do something different with this Title IV-E money. Udow projects that this decision could ultimately help thousands of children stay in their own homes.

Udow explained that DHS, in working with social service agencies such as Orchards Children's Services of Southfield, could sniff out problems before they happen. She talked about a mother who nearly had her kid taken away after she took a belt to him at school. DHS officials looked into the situation and found the mother was a good parent, but severe financial difficulties had created a tense home environment. The mother, though, was too proud to ask for state help.

With this waiver, DHS officials have the ability to red-flag homes and help them with a new refrigerator, help them manage the family's finances better or help a parent break a substance abuse addiction, Udow said.

Udow envisions the federal money being spent on Families First and other programs that offer after-school recreational activities for the kids and substance abuse help for the parents.



Fifteen other states have federal waivers on their Title IV-E money, but DHS officials feel their new program is somewhat unique. Udow said the department asked for the waiver as part of her vision to devote more money early in the process as opposed to throwing money at the problem once a situation has occurred.

DHS is now diving into the planning process with the money and wouldn't hazard to guess how much of the \$95 million would be put toward this family prevention program.

# Foster care change OK'd

*By Jack Kresnak*

**Detroit Free Press**

**April 11, 2006**

The federal government is allowing Michigan and four other states to use money earmarked for foster children from poor families for programs designed to prevent the children from being removed from their homes in the first place.

The federal money comes from the Title IV-E program, which traditionally pays for the care of children from low-income families who are removed from their homes because of suspected abuse or neglect.

The state Department of Human Services will establish two pilot programs using the new funding in five areas, including two in Wayne County.

Other states included in the change are Iowa, Virginia, Florida and California.

## **Hollands' prelim hearing continues**

MASON - The preliminary hearing for Tim and Lisa Holland, charged with murder in the death of their son Ricky, continues at 9 a.m. today in 55th District Court. The hearing for the Williamston couple began Feb. 28 and will determine whether the case advances to trial. The preliminary hearing today is the 14th day of testimony.

The Hollands also are charged with first-degree child abuse. Tim Holland reported Ricky missing July 2. He led police to the boy's remains in rural Ingham County nearly seven months later. For a recap of this story, go to [www.lsj.com](http://www.lsj.com).

# **Search continues for mother of abandoned newborn**

**By: Ray Kisonas**

**Monroe Evening News**

**April 10, 2006 11:30AM**

A newborn infant who was clinging to life when a couple found her on their Brownstown Township doorstep Saturday morning is doing well and expected to survive, police said. The baby was perhaps a few hours old when she was left wrapped in blankets on the concrete doorstep of a home in a new subdivision. A husband and wife walked outside their home in the 2600 block of Ingram St. about 8:23 a.m. and found the semi-conscious baby on their porch.

Detective Lt. Robert Grant of the Brownstown Township Police Department said the baby was wrapped in a blue bath towel and purple crocheted blanket. The baby, a white female, still had its umbilical cord attached. Lt. Grant said it appears the infant was left outside in temperatures in the 20s for up to five or six hours before being found. He said the infant would not have lasted much longer.

"The baby's doing well now, thank God," Lt. Grant said. "The baby laid there for quite a while."

The couple who found the infant notified authorities immediately and the baby was rushed to an area hospital, then transferred to Children's Receiving Hospital in Detroit. The baby had been in critical condition, but improved over the weekend. Police now are trying to locate the infant's mother. Lt. Grant said he is worried that the mother might need medical care. He said he believes she lives in the area.

"We don't know how bad or how injured the mother is right now," he said. "We believe this was a young mother who didn't know what to do."

Lt. Grant believes the home where the baby was abandoned was chosen at random. The subdivision, near Pennsylvania and Inkster Rds., is on the border of Taylor. The baby's umbilical cord appeared to be torn instead of cut, Lt. Grant said. He said she was lucky not to bleed to death.

He said one witness noticed a dark-colored Chevrolet Monte Carlo or Lumina in the area around 1 a.m. Saturday, which puts it in the timeframe of when the baby was left on the doorstep. Lt. Grant said it is not a crime for mothers to leave their unwanted babies at a police station, fire department, hospital or church. Since the story has been reported, Lt. Grant said several people have called wishing to adopt the infant.

"We've already received a half-dozen calls from people wanting to take care of the baby and keep her out of foster homes," Lt. Grant said. "In such a tragic story, at least that part feels good."

Anyone with information about the mother or infant's identity is asked to call Brownstown police at (734) 675-1300.

# Baby was near death when found

**Brownstown Township discovery came not a moment too soon, say doctors and police.**

**Dorothy Bourdet / The Detroit News**

**Tuesday, April 11, 2006**

**BROWNSTOWN TOWNSHIP** -- Baby Jane Doe was likely near death when a 28-year-old truck driver discovered her on his doorstep Saturday. Swaddled in a towel and crocheted blanket, police said Monday the baby had a pulse rate of 60 and a core body temperature of 81 degrees -- both critical levels, according to medical experts.

"That's hypothermia and it's severe," said Bradford Pflaum, a doctor and emergency department director at Oakwood Heritage Hospital in Taylor, where the baby was first treated.

Pflaum said Baby Doe's body had likely switched to survival mode, decreasing blood flow to all but the most vital organs and he estimates she could have survived only a few hours more. Police say the baby girl is doing well at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit. Authorities are continuing to search for parents of the 7 1/2 -pound newborn discovered about 8 a.m. Saturday. With no witnesses and little evidence, police are relying heavily on tips to help locate the parents.

"We really have nothing concrete as to who is responsible for dropping (the baby) off," said Brownstown Township Police Chief Dan Grant.

Parents of the child could face child abuse and neglect charges. Though a resident reported seeing a dark-color Chevrolet Monte Carlo in the neighborhood about 1 a.m., police say they doubt the baby would have survived seven hours in temperatures that hovered around the low 30s. Forensic exams will likely be done on the baby's blankets and could provide DNA samples, but "it certainly won't yield a name," Grant said.

"In a case like that, we're certainly going to rely on the media and tips from the public," he said. Rafal Rozner, who first spotted the tiny bundle on his front porch step Saturday, said Baby Jane Doe is clearly a fighter. "It was good the baby was crying. She survived because she cried," he said. "She helped herself; she's a survivor. Nobody else is a hero."

Child welfare advocates say the baby's plight painfully illustrates how few people know of the **Safe Delivery Law**, five years after it was passed. The law allows parents who feel they cannot care for their child to surrender their infant safely and anonymously.

"Clearly as we see abandonments occurring, that tells us that the Safe Delivery message is not out there," said Jean Hoffman, Safe Delivery Program consultant with the Michigan Public Health Institute.

Unharmful newborns up to 72 hours old can be taken to a fire department, hospital or police station and may be left without giving any identifying information. This year, three Michigan infants have been surrendered to a safe place under the law; at least two abandoned, Hoffman said. Anyone with information about Baby Jane Doe's parents can call Brownstown Township police at (734) 675-1300.

*You can reach Dorothy Bourdet at (734) 462-2203 or [dbourdet@detnews.com](mailto:dbourdet@detnews.com)*



**Robert Turner, now 6, attends a news conference to announce a lawsuit filed against Detroit 911 dispatchers accused of mishandling his calls about his unconscious mother. The suit claims Sherrill Turner would be alive had they responded.**

## **Expert: 911 rules were broken**

**He says operators who took child's call failed to follow script and use professional demeanor.**

Paul Egan / The Detroit News

A national expert on emergency response says the Detroit 911 operators who took calls for help from 5-year-old Robert Turner broke the first three basic rules on how to respond.

The city may need to take a hard look at the way it trains its operators and assures quality responses to 911 calls, Scott Freitag, president of the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch in Salt Lake City, said Monday.

The three most important rules in handling any 911 call, Freitag said, are:

- Treat every call as legitimate until proven otherwise.
- Follow a script, rather than ad-libbing a response.
- Use a professional and encouraging demeanor.

"Based on what I've heard, they didn't follow those rules," said Freitag, who has listened to tapes of two calls Robert placed to 911 on Feb. 20 after Robert's mother, Sherrill, 46, passed out.

"She made him feel from the very beginning quit bothering us."

Freitag made his comments as Southfield lawyer Geoffrey Fieger filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against the unnamed city 911 operators who took the calls and released details about another incident, in 2005, when he said a city woman could not get a dispatcher to take her seriously after she was shot in the head.

As the stories continued to receive national attention, large numbers of Detroiters expressed unhappiness, frustration and disgust with the quality of response to their 911 calls.

City officials refused to comment, saying they have nothing to add to Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings' statement Friday that an investigation is under way and the public should not rush to judgment.

Kimberly Harris, president of the union local representing Detroit's 911 operators, could not be reached for comment.

Freitag said dispatchers have tough jobs but must treat each call as potentially life-threatening. Nationally, fewer than 1 percent of the more than 500,000 911 calls placed each day are prank calls in which someone is trying to play a trick on the operator, he said.

But the percentage of 911 calls that are bad calls, which also includes hang-ups, misdials, and accidental activation of 911 buttons on cellular phones, amounts to 10 percent to 15 percent, depending on the jurisdiction, according to Freitag.

Only about 35 percent of all 911 calls are life-threatening emergencies, he said. Call and crank call statistics were not available Monday from Detroit officials.

Fieger filed a lawsuit in the Turner case in Wayne County Circuit Court and released copies of a lawsuit he filed in another 911 case in October.

Lorraine Hayes did not die, but was left a paraplegic as a result of poor 911 response, Fieger said.

In January 2005 Hayes called 911 from her home after she was shot in the head and chest and operators threatened her about making a false report, according to a 911 transcript released by Fieger.

"If you got shot in the temple, ma'am, you wouldn't be able to call me," a 911 operator told the woman at one point.

Many Detroiters contacted The News Monday to relate their own complaints with 911 service. Reginald Cunningham said when he called 911 to report his wife was being assaulted in their driveway, the operator did not want to send a police officer and told him to tell her to come inside.

"This is really not an isolated case," Cunningham said. "There is something systemically going wrong with the system."

*You can reach Paul Egan at (313) 222-2069 or [pegan@detnews.com](mailto:pegan@detnews.com).*

## **Robert Turner's calls to 911**

15:16:00- CALL # 1

DISPATCHER: Beep... "911 what's the problem?"

ROBERT: "My mom had passed out."

15:16:19- CALL #1

ROBERT: "She not gonna talk..."

DISPATCHER: "Okay well I'm gonna send police to your house to find out what's going on with you."

15:16:54 - CALL #2

DISPATCHER: "Where's the grownups at?"

ROBERT: (inaudible)

DISPATCHER: "Huh, let me speak to her before I send the police over there..."

15:17:15 - CALL #2

ROBERT: (inaudible)

DISPATCHER: "I don't care, you shouldn't be playing on the phone. Now put her on the phone before I send the police out there to knock on the door and you gonna be in trouble."

ROBERT: "Ugh!!!" (Hangs up)



# Boy's 911 calls put trouble in spotlight

## Death of Detroit boy's mom results in lawsuit

April 11, 2006

**BY MARISOL BELLO, FRANK WITSIL and JOE SWICKARD**

**FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS**

A Detroit mother couldn't save her son five years ago, and now her heart breaks anew because another child couldn't save his mom. In both cases, pleading calls to 911 failed to bring help. Anshiree Martin's 9-year-old son, Damion Cottingham, died in her arms in 2001, gasping for breath in an asthma attack after a Detroit 911 operator repeatedly assured her that help was on the way.

Martin -- who sued the city in 2001 and won an arbitrator's award of \$325,000 -- said Monday she knows the grief felt by 6-year-old Robert Turner, whose calls to 911 in February after his mom collapsed were considered possible pranks. Sherrill Turner, 46, died of complications from an enlarged heart, putting Detroit's emergency response system under harsh criticism and intense scrutiny, and prompting a lawsuit filed Monday. Police say they are investigating the incident. Union officials have defended the actions of the operators, whose names have not been released.

"It's sad, and all because of one person who holds your whole life in their hands," Martin said. "I can imagine how that little boy feels, three hours with his mom like that. Every day I deal with this."

On Monday, attorney Geoffrey Fieger -- with Robert at his side playing with a Spider-Man toy -- filed a \$1-million lawsuit on behalf of Robert and his mother's estate, claiming gross negligence and intentional infliction of emotional distress on the part of Detroit 911 operators who took the boy's calls.

Saying Sherrill Turner's death isn't an isolated case, Fieger also said he represents another woman whose calls last year to 911 -- she said she had been shot in the head -- were met with skepticism and delay. A dispatcher asked her if she was a mental patient. Fieger said Lorraine Hayes is a paraplegic because of her injuries and only got help after she called relatives in Minnesota, who contacted Detroit police.

In a telephone interview with the Free Press, Hayes said Monday the dispatcher "treated me like a piece of garbage." Such a sentiment comes as no surprise to Martin, 31, who said the grief over losing her son won't go away. Every weekend, she and her 5-year-old daughter visit his grave.

"He passed away in my arms in his bedroom because of the negligence of one operator," Martin said.

When Damion was stricken with an asthma attack, Martin, an accountant who lives on the west side, said she called 911 and was told an ambulance was on its way. When none arrived, she said she and her fiance called again and again. She said an operator told them an ambulance would arrive in 7 to 8 minutes, even though EMS technicians told the operator and another dispatcher they did not know when they could arrive because they were on the other side of town. But Martin said the operator repeatedly told her the ambulance was on its way. It took the ambulance

22 minutes to arrive. By then, Damion had died. Martin said Monday if the operator had been truthful, she would have taken her son to a hospital.

"If she had told us the truth, maybe he'd be alive," she said.

Martin said she doesn't know if the operator was ever disciplined and, in light of the latest incident, said it's clear dispatchers have to receive more training about dealing properly with emergencies.

"I wouldn't call 911 now," she said. "I've been there and I wouldn't want my life in their hands." But city officials have said the 911 system hasn't been a hot button issue in years. Detroit Ombudsman Durene Brown said her office has gotten only one complaint about the system in the past six months although she said citizens can also complain directly to the police or fire departments.

Second Deputy Police Chief James Tate said the number of complaints received by his office was not available Monday. He added, however, that Detroit's 911 system is a busy one, handling about 2 million calls a year for police, fire and EMS services. Many of those, he said, are for nonemergency situations. According to this year's budget, 23 operators handle emergency calls and another 20 operators handle nonemergency calls to the system. The city spends \$3.4 million on the system. Union officials have estimated about one-quarter of the calls are pranks.

Fieger, however, maintains in the lawsuit that city dispatchers have been too quick to shrug off some calls. For instance, he said when Hayes called 911 in January 2005, she clearly and calmly asked for an ambulance, saying, "I've been shot in the head. I'm dying."

In a tape and transcript Fieger claimed is a record of Hayes' call, the woman provides her name and answers the dispatcher's questions politely with "yes, ma'am," and "no ma'am." She tells the dispatcher she has been shot in the head twice by her husband and is on the floor and bleeding. She gives her address and repeatedly asks for help.

The dispatcher continues to question her, asking at one point: "Are you a mental patient?"

Hayes responded, "No ma'am."

The dispatcher also warned her -- much as Robert Turner was scolded by a dispatcher this year -- that she would get in trouble if she made a false report. In a second call, according to Fieger's documents, Hayes told a dispatcher, "I'm getting ready to die." The dispatcher told her that police and EMS were on the way. Hayes repeated her address and said she had been shot in the temple and the chest.

The dispatcher responded, "But you are able to call on the phone? That's a miracle." "I'm dying," Hayes said. "I swear to God."

Contact **JOE SWICKARD** at 313-222-8769 or [jswickard@freepress.com](mailto:jswickard@freepress.com).



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW  
DIRECTOR

## News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

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### **DHS will Expand Prevention and Family Preservation Services to Keep Children Safely at Home** *Michigan One of Five States Approved for Federal Funding Waiver*

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**April 10, 2006**

LANSING – Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) officials today announced that Michigan is one of five states approved by the federal government to use Title IV-E foster care funding to pay for prevention and early intervention services to help families stay together safely.

With this approval, federal funding can be used to help more Michigan children remain safely in their own homes and reduce the number of children who grow up in foster care.

“Every child deserves to grow up in a safe and stable home and the State of Michigan is committed to an aggressive, proactive plan to protect our children,” said Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. “We will act swiftly on this new opportunity, and continue moving forward on our plan to keep children safe and support Michigan families.”

Funding can also be used for services to help children already in care return home in a safe and timely manner or – when this is not possible – move more quickly into a permanent family.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approved Michigan’s request under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. Title IV-E funding is usually earmarked for traditional foster care expenses such as board, care, and administration.

“This approval is a tremendous boost to our overall plan for protecting children and preserving families,” said DHS director Marianne Udow. “Our reforms to date have already resulted in fewer children in the foster care system, fewer children re-entering the system, and more children placed with relatives. With this approval, we can expand our prevention efforts and provide families with the kind services they need to keep their children safely at home.”

Under the waiver, the state will conduct pilots in five communities, including two in Wayne County. The Wayne County pilot will include six Detroit neighborhoods that are part of the Skillman Foundation’s Good Neighborhoods Initiative. The department will solicit bids from other counties interested in becoming pilot sites; the additional sites will be chosen and implementations will begin between October 1, 2006 and March 30, 2007.

- more -

In pilot counties, the state will use IV-E funds to expand family preservation programs (like Families First of Michigan), strengthen family reunification programs, and increase involvement of both birth parents and foster parents in decisions made on behalf of the child. The state can also use the funds to stabilize adoptions and support relative caregivers.

The Detroit-based Skillman Foundation provided a grant to DHS that helped the department secure the federal waiver. The Skillman Foundation is a resource for improving the lives of children in metropolitan Detroit. The Foundation applies its resources to foster positive relationships between children and adults, support high-quality learning opportunities and strengthen healthy, safe and supportive homes and communities. The foundation was founded in December, 1960, by Rose P. Skillman, widow of Robert H. Skillman, vice president and director of Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, and has an annual grant making budget of \$23 million.

"Michigan is committed to strong action on behalf of children," Udow said. "Our family- and community-centered approach to child welfare, our Family Resource Centers in at-risk schools, our plan for reducing minority disproportionality, and the Governor's development of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation are all receiving national attention. By approving our request to redirect foster care funding into prevention and early intervention services, the federal government is helping us continue our aggressive steps to protect children and preserve families in Michigan."

**For more information about the Michigan Department of Human Services, go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs)**

# This Week in Washington

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## House Budget Negotiations Continue

On April 6, the House began debate on its fiscal year 2007 budget resolution, H.J. Res. 766. The resolution has been altered from the version passed by the Budget Committee last week to address concerns by both moderate and conservative Republicans. The Budget Committee's version included an \$837 billion cap on discretionary funding and reconciliation instructions for eight committees to find a total of \$6.8 billion in savings over five years in mandatory programs.

## APHSA and National Governors Association Comment on New TANF Law

On March 24, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and the National Governors Association (NGA) submitted comments on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provisions in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA). The recommendations were developed by a task force from the two organizations and were submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The comments call on HHS to "define activities broadly that count toward the TANF participation rate, allow states to establish workable verification systems, and provide realistic timeframes to allow states to make legislative and programmatic changes in a thoughtful and careful manner." They also say that HHS should "take into account the negative impact that restrictive regulations may have on harder-to-serve recipients who may face severe barriers to work." The letter also urges HHS to recognize that states must comply with other federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, in meeting the new TANF law. The comments were grouped into five major topics: HHS should define work activities broadly so states can engage participants in a manner that best supports entry into the workforce and promotes strong families; HHS should continue to recognize circumstances for which child-only cases should be excluded from the work rate calculations; verification requirements developed by HHS should not be administratively burdensome on states, employers, or organizations working with TANF recipients; implementation timeframes should allow for a transition period before states must meet the requirements of the new regulations; and in developing the regulations, HHS should address other areas related to DRA implementation that are of key concern to states. The joint NGA-APHSA recommendations are available at <http://www.nga.org/files/pdf/06TANFRECOMMENDATIONS.pdf>.

## House Subcommittee Reviews Use of Technology in Assistance Programs

On April 5, the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources held a hearing on the "Use of Technology to Improve Public Benefit Programs." Most of the witnesses were human service administrators, and the majority of the discussion focused on ways that technology had helped states through the 2005 hurricane disasters and improvements needed to more successfully deal with future

disasters. Diane Rath, chair of the Texas Workforce Commission, described how essential Texas's automation system had been to dealing with Katrina and Rita refugees last fall. Marketa Gautreau, assistant secretary of community services for the Louisiana Department of Social Services, described plans for greater automation in the state's child welfare system using the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System. She noted that since many paper child welfare records were destroyed in the storms, Louisiana's existing automation was invaluable in preserving part of the system. Don Winstead, deputy secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families, described Florida's ACCESS eligibility redesign system and how it helped the state handle last season's influx of disaster cases. Lisa Henley, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) project director for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, described her state's successes in using EBT cards for child care benefits. Several subcommittee members also discussed with the panel the potential effect on human service operations of the proposed Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) reduction in the administration's FY 2007 budget request. Rep. Jim McCrery (R-La.) indicated that he doubted Congress would approve any SSBG cuts. More information is available at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=detail&hearing=472&comm=2>.

### **Bost Nominated as Ambassador to South Africa**

On April 4, the White House announced that President Bush intends to nominate Eric M. Bost to be ambassador to South Africa. Bost currently serves as undersecretary for food, nutrition and consumer services at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and oversees the Food and Nutrition Service. Bost formerly served as commissioner of the Texas Department of Human Services and deputy director at the Arizona Department of Economic Security. More information is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/print/20060404-5.html>.

### **HHS Inspector General Recommends Medicaid and Medicare Savings**

On March 29, the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) posted the 2005 Cost-Saver Handbook, commonly called the "Red Book." The Red Book is a compendium of significant OIG cost-saving recommendations that have not been fully implemented. According to OIG, full implementation of the Red Book recommendations could produce substantial savings for HHS. In the publication, OIG summarizes the current law, the reason that the agency believes action is needed, the estimated savings that would result, and the status of actions taken. The publication also indicates the type of action needed (legislative, regulatory, or procedural). The new savings recommendations in this edition are directed at Medicaid and Medicare. They address oversight by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on cost-avoidance waivers; noncustodial parent contributions toward their children's Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program costs; and several recommendations on reducing drug costs, among others. Full details are available at <http://www.oig.hhs.gov/publications/docs/redbook/Red%20Book%202005.pdf>.

### **Title IV-E Waivers on Flexible Foster Care Funding Approved**

On March 31, the authority for HHS to approve Title IV-E waiver demonstration projects expired. Prior to the deadline, California and Florida received approval for waivers to flexibly use Title IV-E funds. The waivers allow federal IV-E foster care funds to be used for any child welfare purpose rather than being restricted to out-of-home care. The waiver demonstration projects are approved for a five-year period, include a 2 percent to 3 percent funding increase each year, and require an evaluation component. Three other states were approved for waiver demonstration projects on various other topic areas prior to the expiration of the HHS approval authority. Iowa was approved for one waiver on guardianship and one waiver on managed care focusing on older youth; Michigan was approved for a waiver on intensive services; and Virginia was approved for a waiver on guardianship. Further details on all approved waiver demonstration projects will be made available on the Children's Bureau website at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs\\_fund/index.htm#child](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/index.htm#child).

### **IRS Addresses Earned Income and Child Credits for Hurricane Victims**

On March 30, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) released additional guidance that addresses eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by families affected by last year's hurricane disasters. IRS has previously released information on implementation details of 2005 legislation that addresses EITC and Child Tax Credit (CTC) benefits for hurricane victims. The new guidance adds detail on several issues; for example, tax filers who were residents of a hurricane disaster zone eligible to receive federal assistance can use their 2004 earned income amount when figuring their EITC and CTC refund if their 2005 earned income is lower than their 2004 earned income. The guidance also provides more details on when a child's separation from parents or caretaker due to a hurricane constitutes a "temporary absence," under which the tax filer could still claim the child for EITC even though they may not have lived together for more than half the year. The guidance also provides instructions for workers who have not yet obtained wage documentation for 2005 and have delayed filing their returns. The filing deadline for individuals who were residing in locations most affected by Hurricane Katrina has been extended to August 28, 2006. More information on the IRS guidance is available at <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=155782,00.html>.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect Data Released**

On April 4, HHS released Child Maltreatment 2004, an annual publication that reports child abuse and neglect statistics based on information from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. The report indicates that child protective service agencies received almost three million reports of possible maltreatment in 2004. States reported 872,000 substantiated cases of maltreatment of children. The full report is available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/index.htm>. In addition, HHS has posted information for Child Abuse Prevention Month at <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention/index.cfm>.

### **ACF Announces National Healthy Marriage Resource Center Web Site**

This week, the HHS Administration for Children and Families announced creation of the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center web site. The site was created in partnership with the University of Minnesota, Syracuse University, Texas Tech University, Brigham Young University, Norfolk State University, and the Child Trends research center. The DRA provided \$100 million a year for the Healthy Marriage Initiative. The new web site is located at <http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org>.